TO THE PEOPLE OF NEBRASKA TERRITORY.

CITIZENS:

An interesting period in our Territorial history dawns upon us, and exhorts us to another struggle for right and law. "Who would be free himself must strike the blow." We have foes without and traitors within to contend with; yet a firm reliance upon the justice of our cause, will give us the moral courage and political forecast to defeat the one and to guard against the other. We have before us an object worthy our best exertions and most generous support. That object is to exchange anarchy for order, and to overthrow arbitrary and irresponsible power, and in its stead secure the blessings of republican government — What nobler aim could animate a human breast! What holier cause could nerve a patriot's arm?

And yet, strange as it may seem, there are men (they have the outward image at least) who are not only indifferent to this glorious cause, but are deadly hostile to it! — Men who have so long "bent the pliant hinges of the knee that thrift might follow," that they dread to stand erect in the full exercise of a freeman's rights. And yet, like Judas, they wish "to carry the bag" and are willing to embrace the new doctrine upon that condition, but with the mental reservation, that they will imitate their great prototype when the opportunity shall present itself.

One year ago "solitary and alone I set the ball in motion." By one of those mysterious agencies which sometimes shroud the plainest truths in darkness, it was become the universal opinion that this territory had been set apart exclusively for Indian colonization, and that conditions had been inserted in the treaties with the emigrating tribes, which inhibited the government from enacting any Territorial government over the country without their assent having been previously obtained.

So settled had become this conviction in the public mind, that no one even questioned it, thus a beautiful and fertile country was long kept a solitude, relieved by annual scenes of brawls and profligacy consequent upon the payment of Indian annuities.

Since my first domiciliation in the territory, eight years ago, I have been much absent; and it was not until after my return from California, two years since, that I felt and saw in the broad light of experience, the evils that arose from the unwise and unjust policy of our Goverment.

That a Republic, established upon the broad basis of equal rights and claiming to be an independent power, should either by treaty or by law repudiate a central portion of its territory, or indeed any portion, and divest itself of the right and power to extend over it wholesome and equitable laws, appeared to me at war with common sense; and to deny to its citizens that protection which forms the very first ingredient in civil government, smacks more of despotism than of Republicanism.

I did not believe our Government had been guilty of any such act of arbitrary power. I determined to investigate the subject for myself. But it was only after much delay and inquiry that I could get a copy of the laws and treaties. At some of the Indian Agencies where they should have been, I was told they were not; through the kindness of a moravian missionary I was favored with the desired documents. I hastened to make the examination, the result was satisfactory, my conjectures were confirmed, my country sustained; she had outlawed no portion of her territory; but had left the way open to extend the protecting arm of civil government, as the westward-moving masses of population might require. Thus successively she reclaimed Wisconsin, Iowa, a part of Missouri and Minnesota; all of which, with Nebraska, had been set aside for the "Indian Country" by the little understood and much misrepresented law of 1834.

I announced the fact to the country, and spent weeks in visiting the more populous parts, of the Territory, and urging the citizens to make an effort to rid ourselves of the oppressions to which we were subject by an unwise governmental policy and popular error. I proposed that the people should hold an election, and send a delegate to Congress, as the best means of bringing our wants and claims to the knowledge of that body.

But I encountered violent opposition from all the federal office holders in the Territory. The military, 'studious of their ease,' had no inclination for more remote frontier posts — the Indian agents had no taste for the 'posts of honor" to which the propose change evidently pointed. And the employees under both, with that diffidence natural to the laboring classes, were reluctant to oppose official power. Yet I had the satisfaction to perceive, beneath this apparent apathy, a real anxiety for the success of the proposed measure. From this fact, and the settled conviction that my proposition was right, I was convinced that the popular will would soon break forth in defiance of official dictation.

One martial gentleman, the commanding officer of an important post in the Territory, allowed his wrath to outstrip his discretion so far as to threaten, that if any attempt should be made to hold the proposed election he would seize and punish every white man engaged in it.' Bad and ignorant men will sometimes get into office, without the error being properly chargeable to the appointing power. It is, therefore an important duty the citizen owes to himself to ascertain, as far as may be, the relative right of the citizen and the officer. Had the threats of this tyrant been regarded, Nebraska would still be an unknown solitude, without a place in the history or maps of the country.

But thanks to those undaunted spirits who stood up with me for the right, in defiance of usurped authority, Nebraska now occupies a larger space in the public mind than any of our flourishing Territories; and Congress has given an earnest that ere another year roll around, she will be numbered among the incipient stars of the American banner.

The election was held on the second Tuesday of October last, and I was chosen delegate to Congress. About the same time a few individuals, from the State of Missouri and other parts of the country, appointed a day for another election and nominated another person as their candidate. "Commissioners" were appointed to receive the polls and to give a certificate of election. — At this so called election I was not a candidate. For if a party either by default or defeat be unsuccessful, it would be an absurdity to recognize a second election wich they may choose to hold to overthrow the first. — For this reason I was not a candidate at this second election. Yet many of my friends, who had not previously voted, took this occasion to testify their confidence in me, and attended the polls and gave me a handsome majority. But did the "Commissioners" send me a certificate of election? No, they pocketed the poll-books, and I never had one word from them on the subject. This farce did neither harm nor good, and I only now allude to it to show its connection with another about to be enacted. The intention doubtless was to injure me, and to prevent the organization of the Territory. But here was not the end. Letters were written to Washington by some of this same crew, to disparage my election and, to cripple my influence, and a foul lie invented for the purpose. As this falsehood is still industriously circulated, I shall notice it again before I close.

This infamous plot, though conducted with great secrecy, was a complete failure. Every poisoned arrow fell short of its object. I got my Territorial bill through the House, and had an ascertained majority in its favor in the Senate. But untoward circumstances, (not the traitors) caused its postponement.

When I call to mind the powerful and violent opposition with which I had to contend in Washington, backed by the blackhearted treachery of miscreants at home, my success indeed appears extraordinary.

I was not ignorant of the means employed to render my efforts unsuccessful. — But this fact, so far from discouraging me, only served to increase my vigilance and activity. I cast aside every consideration of private interest, and allowed but one thought to occupy my mind, but one great object to control my actions. Such was the discouraging aspect of affairs in the earlier part of the session, that the best friends of Nebraska in Congress did not believe that any bill for its organization could pass the House of Representatives. But by ceaseless exertions and judicious management, it did pass by an overwhelming majority, which at once swept away all difficulties and mysticism which had so long surrounded the subject.

I paid my own expenses and devoted my own time in furtherance of this grand object. Thus, at a heavy sacrifice of time and money, I brought this business to the very point of sucess. And yet I now find men mean enough to endeavor to thrust me aside, to appropriate to themselves the credit of work I have done, and that, too, in opposition to their wishes. An English poet has written somewhat as follows:

> "Who steals my purse steals trash;
> But he who filches from me my good name"
> Is no less a scoundrel.

On the 26th of July last a large Convention of the people of the Territory was held at Wyandott City. This Convention did me the honor to compliment me in a resolution of thanks, and to nominate me for re-election as delegate to Congress. For these evidences of appreciation of past services and of confidence, my heart overflows with gratitude. To one unused to public honors, such marks of respect and confidence are peculiarly flattering. I have accepted the nomination and now present myself before you in the character conferred upon me by the Convention.

An incident of this Convention demands from me a brief notice. This was a private proposition to me to decline being a candidate.

I believe I am entirely free from that "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself," nor am I a seeker of office of any kind. If I were, I would have enrolled myself with the mighty multitude that beset the President at the close of the last session of Congress. — Many influential friends advised me to seek an appointment, and proffered their influence. But I had long since determined never to bend the knee at the footstool of power for any favor whatever. Not that I condemn office-seeking. I think it as honorable to ask the President for an office as to ask employment of any kind of another person, if the applicant will only deport himself like a man — honorably and independently.

But the reasons so blandly assigned for the request, that I should decline being a candidate were so infamous, and insulting, that a proper degree of selfrespect would compel me to be a candidate, even if I were sure I would not get a half-dozen votes. — These reasons were, that a certain Senator of Missouri said, that no man of my sentiments could get a seat in Congress; and that the support of another distinguished member of Congress from the same State, which it was presumed I would rely upon, would destroy my influence!

What are these sentiments that are to be so fatal to my pretensions to a seat in Congress? I am accused of abolitionism! The accusation is false, and the man who utters it is a liar. I have no sympathies with that class of politicians — have always opposed their doctrines and their party. And yet I am politely asked to confirm this lie upon myself by my own act, and that too, by the very men who invented it and circulate it! A simple-minded and beardless youth was employed as the vehicle of this reasonable proposition. He could not have comprehended the baseness of such a mission, or he would certainly not have undertaken it. I think his own sense of propriety would have recoiled from it, if he had reflected upon it. However, it gives me an opportunity of making known my views upon the question of slavery, although I cannot comprehend what we have to do with the subject at all.

The Missouri Compromise Act, (the repeal of which some gentlemen just now appear so anxious to make a hobby of) was passed when the South had all power — the President and a majority in both Houses of Congress. It has received the sanction of thirty-three years of legislation. The fiercest conflicts have taken place in Congress on the subject of slavery but no attempt has yet been made to repeal the Missouri Compromise Act.

I have never been in favor of Congress prescribing boundaries for the area of slavery. I think it is a question of State policy which the people of the State or Territory alone should decide.

Upon this question, I occupy the ground claimed by the South up to the period when California with an anti-slavery constitution in hand demanded admission into the Union. I entertain the same views yet. I was brought up in that school of politics taught by Southern statesmen and imbibed most of their sentiments. And I have never changed an opinion upon any of the great questions that divided parties.

In reference to the constitutionality of this law which certain gentleman deny I have nothing to say, for the questen has not been adjudicated, but so far as my opinion will go to settle it, it appears to me that if Congress has the power to exclude the *white* man from the Territory, which every body (but myself) appears to admit, it is but reasonable to suppose it has the power to exclude the *black* man.

But it has become the fashion of late with a certain class of politicians to brand every man who is not the advocate of slavery, as an abolitionist. There is not a Northern man but comes under the ban of this epithet. And it is doing more to alienate the friendship of the North from the South than all other causes put together, because it is a calumny the offspring of ingratitude, and therefore the more offensive.

When the bill for the organization of Nebraska was in progress of preparation, I proposed to Mr. Hall, (who framed the bill) to insert a clause, admitting slavery into the Territory in a limited form. But he knew the sentiments of Congress better than I, and replied that such a provision would only serve to defeat the bill. I am sorry to tell this little story on Mr. Hall, who for his integrity and enlarged views of public policy, I think entitled to the snubriquet of Young Bullion, for I fear it will lay him liable to the charge of Abolitionism. It seems indeed that no man is to be free from this charge, who does not commit some act of insanity in support of "the institution."

This proposition of mine (as I afterwards learned) was not a new one. A similar application was made to Congress by the people of Indiana in, (I think) the year 1817, and reported *against* by *John Randolph!*

In the Nebraska Bill as it passed the House, and as it passed the Senate's committee, there was not a word on the subject of slavery; and no fault was found with it on this account. No one attempted to introduce the "Wilmot Proviso;" no one called for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. There was not a man in Congress fool enough or fiend enough, to move the repeal of that act. Every man acquainted with public sentiment knows the repeal cannot be effected and none but Abolitionists, and perhaps a few very ignorant men of the opposite extreme, desire the agitation of that subject. But no intelligent friend of the country, or of Slavery will endeavor to throw this fire brand into the deliberations of Congress. No man but one ambitious of notoriety will attempt it — I have no such ambition. My object from the start has been to get a government similar to that of the other Territories of the United States. That obtained, my ambition will be confined within the narrow limits of a small farm. Such a sphere of action is more in consonance with my inclinations than the wranglings which seem inseparable from political life. But I shall always be ready to resist what is wrong and support what is right, at any sacrifice.

I have been informed that Gen. Atchison has said that if a man favorable to the repeal should be elected delegate to Congress, it would be effected. If the General has said this he is neither as honest nor as good a man as I have given him credit for. I do not believe he expressed any such opinion. — The suggestion, if made at all, could only have been made to prevent my re-election. And why he should desire such a result, I am at a loss to understand, as I have thought and spoken favorably of him when occasion offered. He was an open and honorable opponent of Nebraska, during the earlier part of the last session of Congress. But I never complained of this. I like an honorable opponent. But I do not like to have false issues raised against myself from any quarter.

But it appears there is to be another object attained in my defeat — the proscription of a supposed friend of Col. Benton, for the vindictive spirit of his enemies is not confined by geographical lines. We have certainly nothing to do with Missouri politics, and I don't understand why Missouri should interfere with ours. Benton was the friend of Nebraska and as I am always grateful for favors, I told the fact to the country, but I did not say the half that I ought to have said of that great man's good offices in our behalf. I was afraid it might appear too elaborate. — His name too has been so familiar to me from my earliest political readings that it has become associated in my mind with the great men of "Livy's pictured page." And it suprises me, as it will surprise future ages that any high minded man can join the noisy pack of curs that yelp at the old lion's heels.

There is, it seems, to be another convention for the purpose of bringing out another candidate who is to be free from all suspicion of a sincere desire to secure a government for the Territory. I see upon the call for this Convention the names of some of the actors in the farce of November last — men who "prefer to have the Territory remain as it is, or sunk into hell to being organized under the Missouri Compromise." I certainly have no objection opposition and would rather have it from the enemies of organization: if they will only come out boldly and make the issue distinctly understood. This is the kind of opposition I have had from the start and am getting used to it. But in addition I suspect their are some nice calculations of self-interest. The race of Falstaffs is not extinct. — They are as ready now as in the days of Percy to claim the reward of other people's merits. After the battle is fought and the victory won, they come in like other jackalls to seize the spoils. Poor devils! without energy to start an enterprise or sense to project a plan they follow like wolves, in the wake of others to fatten on the fruits of superior industry and ability.

There is I understand an effort making to excite the jealousy of our neighbors, the Missourians. They are told that the settlement of Nebraska will divert trade from their frontier towns. What an absurd view of the subject! It would be as reasonable to contend that a cart with one wheel is better than with two wheels. To assert that a town will increase in business, wealth and population, with one half the country around it cultivated and the other half a desert, more rapidly than if the whole were cultivated, is certainly presuming very far upon the gullibility and ignorance of those to who the idea is addressed. The argument is certainly a new one and may have some charms on that account. It was probably never used before. Did Virginia use it against the settlement of Ohio? Did Ohio use it against the settlement of Indiana? Or Indiana against Illinois? No, for the first time it comes out bright as a new pewter dollar, and just as valuable. But this is an age of invention and discovery! Query — is this an invention or discovery?

The plain selfevident fact is the organization of Nebraska will increase the business and value of property in all the border towns of western Missouri, a hundred per cent. — But they are even yet more important to Missouri for the influence they will exert upon the system of railroads recently projected in that State. Without the settlement of Nebraska, this system must languish and die. Our neighbors need not therefore be jealous of us on this ground. Our interests and theirs are closely identified — our prosperity will be their prosperity.

In the reply of Col. Benton to a letter addressed to him by citizens of Monroe county Missouri, he says, "I consider it very unfortunate that no person in Congress knew the condition of this Western Territory, when the Nebraska bill was under discussion last winter." And from the published proceedings of Congress on that occasion no other inference can be drawn than that this ignorance did exist in that body. But lest I may be inferentially implicated in this neglect of duty (though not admitted to a seat) I will state that early in the session I called upon the Commissioner of Indian affairs in person, and requested a map exhibiting the Indian grants and public lands of this Territory, but was told there was no such map; but that one was being prepared, which would be finished in a few days. I called repeatedly for this map, but still it was not completed, nor did I get it until within a day or two of the time when the bill had to be reported or lost.

I immediately laid this map (an official document) before the House committee on Territories, and I believe satisfied that committee that the Indian grants covered but a small portion of the Territory. I was the more anxious to have this map because in conversations with the opponents of the organization, they asserted that the Indians owned every foot of land in the Territory. — And so anxious was I to have this point cleared up, and the facts made known to the House that with my own hands I spread this map out before the chairman of the committee when this bill came up for discussion and it remained upon his desk (and was examined by many members) during the whole debate.

Why this strong point was not urged by the Chairman of the committee on Territories I know not. There was indeed a mysterious reluctance on the part of many of the professed friends of the bill, to give it that cordial support, which an honest conviction of right usually prompts. I thought I could trace this feeling to a source; but that source is now dried up, and will yield no more of its noxious exhalations. A member from North Carolina told me that the chairman had acknowledged in his speech that the Indians did own all the lands in the Territory. This, if true, was a very extraordinary admission, with the evidence to the contrary spread upon the desk before him. It is due to the Chairman to say that though I listened attentively to his speech, I heard no such admission.

I subsequently carried this map to the committee room of the Senate's committee on Territories and laid it before that committee. Here the important facts disclosed by it appeared to be properly appreciated.

You are aware that an appropriation was made at the last session of Congress to enable the President to treat with the Indians of Nebraska. This was a consequence of my election last fall. But up to the present moment nothing has been done in compliance with the design of this law. This is much to be regretted as the more favorable season of the year for making Indian treaties is now past. It is to be hoped that some satisfactory cause for this extraordinary neglect may be made known to the public.

In regard to the Indians I think the true policy as dictated by justice and humanity would be to grant the rights of citizenship to every Indian who desires to hold his land in severalty and to renounce his tribal privileges and immunities. None would accept of these conditions but such as are qualified to sustain their new character as citizens. — The rest will of course seek wilder homes, more congenial to their tastes as do many of the white pioneers, who prefer the freedom of the wilderness to the restraints of society.

In most of the projects submitted to Congress at the last session for making roads and erecting Telegraph lines it was proposed that large bodies of the public lands should be donated to corporate companies to aid in the construction of those works. This monopoly of the public lands is one of the most serious obstacles against which a young State has to struggle. And as this policy would fall more crushingly upon Nebraska than upon any other section of the country it behooves us to guard against the danger.

I happened to be in the Senate chamber last winter when a proposition of this kind came up which would have taken fifteen hundred thousand acres of our lands, worth not less than twenty millions of dollars, five times over the real cost of the proposed work — a line of Telegraph to California. Senators could know very little about the value of the grant they were about to make. I made known to some of them the facts in the case and succeeded in defeating the measure by a small majority.

Our prospects for the great railroad to California are daily brightening, and such is my confidence in the eligibility of the Nebraska or central route, that I have no fears of its defeat. A bright future is before us. We want but a government and a liberal system of preemption rights to spread civilization and plenty to the base of the Rocky Mountains.

ABELARD GUTHRIE.

Sept 6, 1853